

Section 5

CASHING FOOD INSTRUMENTS

WIC Food Instrument Redemption Procedures

The Arizona WIC Program relies on its Vendors to see that only WIC authorized foods are purchased. When proper check-out procedures are followed, WIC participants receive the nutrients they need to improve their health status. The cashiers play an important role as part of the Vendor's responsibility to the WIC program.

Vendor's employees must offer WIC participants/authorized representatives and proxies the same courtesies as offered to other customers. **Separate lines or checkout counters may not be established for only WIC customers.**

To take less time during check-out, local agency employees instruct participants/authorized representatives or proxies to separate WIC foods from their other purchases. Sometimes it may be necessary for the cashier to assist a participant/authorized representative or proxy in separating the WIC foods from their other items. Also, the cashier should check the items before starting the transaction to ensure that the participant/authorized representative or proxy has the proper items that are listed on the WIC food instrument.

Cashiers must be familiar with the Arizona WIC Programs Food List to ensure that the participant receives the proper foods. Also to reduce the number of rejected food instruments, cashiers must be familiar with the food instrument redemption procedures outlined on the following pages.

▽ **NOTE:** Arizona WIC Program food instruments may be redeemed anywhere in Arizona as long as they are redeemed by an Arizona WIC Program authorized Vendor .

For example: A food instrument issued in Maricopa County, local agency 07, may be redeemed in Coconino County, local agency 03.

Before ringing up the WIC transaction, the Cashier

SHOULD:

- Identify the WIC Customer
 - ▽ The only acceptable identification will be:
 - ▽ The participant's/authorized representative's ID Folder and Transfer Card, **OR**
 - ▽ The completed and signed Proxy Certification form.
- Check the dates
 - ▽ Do not accept before the date shown in the box marked "FIRST DATE TO USE" or after the "LAST DATE TO USE"
- Check to make sure that the food instrument has not been reported to you (in writing) by the Department as either lost or stolen
- Enter the date the food instrument is used (cashier's responsibility) in the "DATE OF USE" box
 - ▽ Date can be corrected one (1) time only and in the presence of the WIC participant/authorized representative by drawing a single line through the incorrect date, writing in the correct date and initialing the correction.
- Check that the selected items, quantities and units being purchased are as specified on the food instrument
 - ▽ All infant formula must be purchased
 - ▽ No substitutions
 - ▽ No rainchecks
 - ▽ Check the price of each item to avoid overcharges
- Keep each WIC transaction separate
 - ▽ Allow WIC customer to redeem more than one food instrument per visit
 - ▽ Do not combine the total purchase amounts from two or three food instruments into one
 - ▽ Food instrument cannot exceed the maximum amount stated on the food instrument

SHOULD NOT:

- Accept a food instrument which has the signature before the WIC transaction begins.
 - ▽ **NOTE: The signature is not obtained until after the purchase price is written on the food instrument.**
- Accept a food instrument that is altered, including alterations of the participant's name, first date to use, date of use or last date to use, signature, or type, quantities and units of food items authorized for purchase.
 - ▽ **NOTE: The use of correction fluid (white-out) is considered an alteration. However, food items crossed out, highlighted or circled are not considered alterations. The Vendor shall immediately notify the Department of person(s) presenting food instrument(s) which have been altered.**
- Require WIC participants/authorized representatives to purchase other items in order to redeem a food instrument.
- Allow WIC participants/authorized representatives to purchase items not included on the Arizona WIC Programs Food List with a WIC food instrument.

SHOULD:

- Allow the use of coupons, the purchase of items on sale and to take advantage of promotional specials, for example:
 - ✓ Cents off coupons
 - ✓ Free additional ounces
 - ✓ Buy one, get one free
 - ✓ In-store or manufacturer promotions
 - ✓ Store membership discount cards
- 1. **Cents off coupons –**
 - a. Single, double, triple, quadruple and other store coupons (if applicable to the purchase) is acceptable.
 - b. The receipt must document that the value of the coupon was deducted from the total sales price of the WIC foods purchased with the food instrument.
 - c. Do not give the reduced dollar amount to the WIC participant/authorized representative in the form of cash, credit or other valuable goods.
- 2. **Free additional ounces –**
 - a. The free additional ounces should cost the same as the ounces specified on the food instrument. For example: Four additional ounces of peanut butter sold in a special 22 ounce jar for the same cost as the 18 ounce jar.
- 3. **Buy one, get one free –**
 - a. Non-WIC approved foods or items are acceptable free items. For example: Buy a 15 ounce box Cheerios, and get a 15 ounce box of Honey Nut Cheerios free.
 - b. The receipt must document that only WIC authorized foods were paid for with the food instrument.
 - c. The number of ounces of free additional product should not be counted towards the maximum number of ounces allowed by WIC. For example: Buy one 28 ounce box of Nabisco Cream of Wheat hot cereal and get a 14 ounce box free. The 14 ounces from the free box will not be counted against the quantity of 36 ounces specified on the food instrument.
- 4. **In-store or manufacturer promotions –**

WIC customers may take advantage of any/all in-store and/or manufacturer's promotions. Some examples are: Store manager's specials of the day or week or manufacturers marketing their product in a larger size package/container which will cost the consumer the same price as the regular size package/container. (It may say something like 20% more free).
- ✓ **Note: The above-mentioned does not include infant formula promotions.**
- 5. **Store membership discount cards –**

The store's discount cards also known as "clipless coupons" may be used by all WIC customers and with any/all purchases, **INCLUDING WIC infant formula purchases.**

SHOULD NOT:

- Except for infant formula, require WIC participants/authorized representatives to purchase all the items listed on the food instrument.
- Prevent WIC participants/authorized representatives from purchasing all of the items listed on the food instrument.
- Require WIC participants/authorized representatives to purchase specific brands or limit the units of WIC foods (e.g.: allow only a certain brand, limit milk purchases to gallons etc.)
- Charge more than the current shelf price.
- Charge for items not purchased.
- Sell WIC infant formula after the manufacturer's expiration date printed on the package/container.

- Charge sales tax or other tax for WIC foods purchased.
- Give WIC participants/authorized representatives rainchecks for WIC foods that were included in the dollar amount of the sale written on the food instrument.
- Give WIC participants/authorized representatives cash or credit for WIC food instruments redeemed.

After ringing up the WIC transaction, the Cashier

SHOULD:

- Enter the purchase price (cashier's responsibility) in the "\$" box.
 - ▽ The purchase price cannot exceed the maximum dollar amount stated on the food instrument.
- Correct any mistakes in writing the dollar amount on the food instrument by doing the following.
 - ▽ The cashier will draw a single line through the incorrect dollar amount.
 - ▽ The corrected dollar amount is written in the "\$ CORRECTION ONLY" box by the cashier.
 - ▽ The cashier will initial the correction in the "CASHIER INITIAL" box.
- Witness customer signature.
 - ▽ Verify that the signature on the food instrument matches the signature on the ID Folder (or proxy Certification Form) before finalizing the WIC transaction. Remember, the ID Folder and Transfer Card may have one (1) or two (2) signatures in the signature boxes. The signature obtained at the end of the transaction needs to match one of the signatures on the ID Folder and Transfer Card.
- Give WIC customer a clear legible cash register receipt for each of their WIC purchases.
 - ▽ The receipt must reflect the store name, date, quantities purchased and total dollar amount.
 - ▽ The receipt must identify sale as a "WIC" transaction.

SHOULD NOT:

- Accept the food instrument, if the actual cost of the WIC foods purchased exceeds the maximum stated on the food instrument.
- Provide refunds or permit WIC participants/authorized representatives to exchange WIC foods purchased with a food instrument for unauthorized foods, non-WIC type foods or other items, cash or credit, except for exchanges of an identical authorized supplemental food item when the original authorized supplemental food item is defective, spoiled, or has exceeded its "sell by," "best if used by," or other date limiting the sale or use of the food item.
 - ▽ **Note: An identical authorized supplemental food item means the exact brand and size as the original authorized supplemental food item obtained and returned by the WIC participant/authorized representative.**
- Exchange WIC food instruments for non-WIC foods, non-food items, alcohol or tobacco products, lottery tickets, cash or credit.
- Charge WIC participants/authorized representatives the difference in value if the cost of food specified exceeds the maximum value of the food instrument.
- Request full or partial payment from participants/authorized representatives for the value of unauthorized items purchased, food instruments rejected for payment or damaged food instruments. Restitution shall not be requested even if the food instrument was not deposited.

Participant Problems

Both participants/authorized representatives, proxies and Vendors have obligations and responsibilities to the Arizona WIC Program. Although local agency employees train participants/authorized representatives and proxies on the proper use of the food instrument, the participants/authorized representatives or proxy may overlook the proper procedures. Participants/authorized representatives and/or proxies could become abusive when cashiers refuse to allow the purchase of non-authorized items or when they try to redeem their WIC food instruments early.

Vendors are not expected to take abuse from WIC participants/authorized representatives or proxies. All participants/authorized representatives and proxies are advised of their rights and obligations to the Arizona WIC Program. Instructions to use the food instruments are printed on the ID folder. Local agency clinic employees issue warnings and/or suspensions to participants/authorized representatives who have problems with the WIC program food instrument redemption procedures. The participant/authorized representative is also held accountable for the actions of their proxy. Examples of participant problems include, but not limited to:

1. Use a pre-signed food instrument
2. Use an altered food instrument
3. Request cash or credit with food instrument
4. Purchase unauthorized food(s) with food instrument
5. Purchase non-food items with a food instrument
6. Return food for cash
7. Use food instrument before the first date to use

A sample of the pre-addressed, postage paid Arizona WIC Program Vendor Reporting Card for Vendors to use when a WIC participant/authorized representative or proxy attempts to violate WIC program rules and regulations is located in Appendix 2. The form identifies WIC participants/authorized representatives or proxies who are in need of additional training on the proper redemption procedures and in the selection of Arizona WIC Program authorized foods.

The identity of the Vendor, if requested, will be kept confidential. The Department will provide, at a minimum, a supply of Arizona WIC Program Vendor reporting Cards at the beginning of each new Contract period. An additional supply may be requested by completing and submitting (via mail or fax) the Arizona WIC Program Vendor Order Form (See Appendix 2).

Upon receipt of the form, the Department will review the form and mail a letter to the local agency for follow-up action. The local agency will review the correspondence, take follow-up action and report the outcome to the Department. When the Vendor elects not to document in writing a participant/authorized representative or proxy's violation, the Department may document the complaint in-person or through telephone contacts with Vendors on the Arizona WIC Program Vendor/Client Contact/Training form (WIC-15). The Department cannot initiate follow-up action on Vendor complaints unless there is written documentation.